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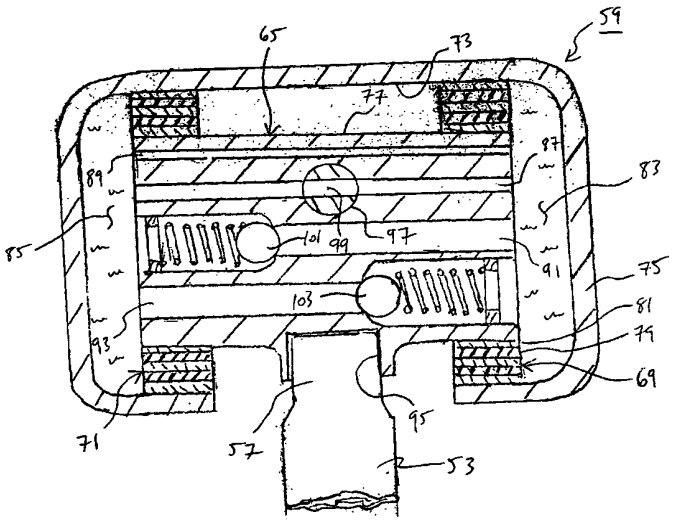
(54) Title: DUAL SPRING RATE DAMPER



(57) Abstract: A damper has a piston having an axis, an outer surface, and opposing ends. Elastomeric seals are in sealing contact with the outer surface of the piston, the seals being coaxial with the piston and limiting movement of the piston to a path along the axis of the piston. The seals also define fluid chambers adjacent the ends of the piston. A primary passage communicates the fluid chambers, and a selectively switchable valve for controls a flow of fluid from one of the chambers to another of the chambers through the primary passage. When the flow of fluid through the primary passage is permitted, movement of the piston is resisted by a first spring rate due to a shear force required to cause shear deflection of the seals. When the flow of fluid through the primary passage is restricted, movement of the piston is resisted by a second spring rate due to a fluid force required to cause bulging deflection of the seals.

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